

THE AYER IDEA
IN ADVERTISING



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FOREWORD



AS WE write there are two hundred and thirty-five advertising agencies in the United States. Ere these words are done into type there will probably be more—or less. Every year sees many starters—a few succeed; some hang on; most fail. Forty-three of these changing, shifting years have slipped past since N. W. Ayer & Son made its beginning. For at least a quarter of a century no person well-informed about advertising has seriously disputed the right of this house to the title of leadership in the advertising business.

We claim the distinction of serving the largest number of advertisers and a number of the largest advertisers. We have more small accounts, more medium-sized accounts and more large accounts than any other agency—we cover more kinds of legitimate commercial enterprise and have broader relations with a greater variety of publications and other forms of advertising media than any other concern engaged in similar work.

All this is not the result of luck. It does not just "happen" to be so.

The thought that many present and prospective advertisers will be interested in knowing the policies and methods which have given the Ayer agency the unquestioned position of Advertising Headquarters prompts the production of this modest volume.



TO NON-BELIEVERS



HERE are men who do not believe in advertising—good men and wise, but that signifies naught. It is but a brief while since many men believed that the earth was flat, but it was round all the time. The earth did not change its shape; men merely altered their views. The point of it all is that there are established facts in business just as there are established facts in nature and belief or disbelief does not change the facts.

Suppose, for instance, you were to say “I do not believe in darkness; I do not want darkness.” Will it not grow dark tonight quite the same as though you were heartily in favor of it?

You may not like the telephone or typewriter or adding machine—thousands of persons do not—but these are estab-

lished instruments in today's activities and your feelings will not alter the facts. To refuse to use them stamps you as being behind the times, and competition with the man or business which does use them is no longer possible for the man or business which does not use them.

The time has passed for giving serious attention to the man who does not believe in advertising. Advertising is as much a part of today's life as electricity, antiseptic surgery or trolley traction.

The system under which he who has something to sell tells about it to those who do or should use it, is a proven, established, actual fact and no single fact has ever yet been whipped by an army of opinions.

Broadly speaking, it is easier and more profitable to obey the Law than to try to break it. If it is a good Law it cannot be resisted. Tackle the Law of Gravity, for instance, and see how far you get with your opposition.

The Law of Demand is just as sane, just as certain and just as natural as the

Law of Gravity. Both work day and night, weekdays, holidays and Sundays and they always pull downward.

Down at the bottom of all commercial success there is Demand insistently tugging away. If Demand can be circumscribed and focused and tied to your product, you have done a big thing and middlemen by the score can no more stand against it than can a few layers of fleecy cloud keep Gravity from accomplishing its effective work.

This is no preachment against the powerful importance of the wholesale or retail merchant. The manufacturer who neglects the dealer in any advertising campaign he may inaugurate is indeed lacking in foresight.

"Forcing the trade" to carry a line has long since given way to better methods. Co-operation is better than coercion. But as a foundation for success nothing can take the place of a powerful consumers' demand.

No one can want anything until he knows of its existence and its fitness for

filling his requirements. Advertising is a way by which people are told why they should have your goods and, at the same time, taught how they may identify them.

The method is backed by good logic and good sense—just the same sort of plain, prosaic business reasoning which is required in any other line of work.

There is nothing magical or mysterious about it and the greatest advertising successes have been singularly free from the frills and furbelows with which some advertising men seek to invest this plainest and simplest aid to present day merchandise distribution.





THE ADVERTISING AGENCY



THE fact that an extremely large percentage of all general and national advertising (as differentiated from retail and local advertising) is handled by advertising agencies would seem to provide ample proof of the value of the agency system, but further proof is at hand. The rightly conducted advertising agency is a high development of the idea of master and servant or principal and agent, worked out along advanced lines.

A good advertising agency furnishes a truly wonderful exemplification of the thought that in dealing with many special interests an intelligent and honest general interest can make itself worth its cost.

A good doctor represents a general interest. When a man is ill there are many kinds of medication in which he might indulge, but a competent physician

knows and understands all of these various remedies and after considering the condition of his patient prescribes the treatment best suited to the case.

When a man becomes involved in legal difficulties there may be many lines of evidence along which he can develop his case, but a good lawyer justifies his existence by considering all of these ways and means and then advising his client which to adopt.

When a man considers advertising he will find many excellent mediums awaiting his use and the special interests of each are promoted by a corps of able salesmen ready with proof that its particular method and plan is the one best suited to the prospective advertiser's needs. Right here a good advertising agency justifies its existence by its knowledge of all the special claims made and its capacity to advise its client what to do and what not to do.

There are few representatives of individual publications who are in a position to make intelligent comparisons between their own and other publications.

Business is not a sanitarium and no one is in business for his health. The advertising agent is no more free from this business bias than is the representative of an individual publication, but the publisher's representative makes his bread and butter by securing advertising for his paper while the advertising agent makes his by developing an advertiser, and this is best accomplished by placing the business in the publication that will best pay the advertiser.

The relation of the modern advertising agency to its clients is widely different from what it was in the beginning. The attitude has been altered by a process of improvement to meet changing conditions.

There was a time when the advertising agent was the special agent of the publisher, and he very naturally placed business with the publications which gave him the highest reward in the form of a commission. But from the beginning of its business, this house has advocated a principle diametrically opposed to that

practice, and today it is quite generally recognized that the advertising agent who most helpfully serves the advertiser, advising him how to proceed, securing for his use the most effective space, assuring him of absolutely lowest prices and charging him a commission for the service rendered, is the one who deserves, and is accorded, greatest consideration by reputable publishers.

At one time a Count was a man in charge of a count of five hundred persons, to whom he was a sort of over-lord. This is not true today because of altered political conditions. We still have Counts, but the Count business has changed somewhat.

A carpenter today is a man who works in wood. Twenty centuries ago there were carpenters in the Holy Land, but most of the houses there are of stone. At that time carpentry evidently embraced the work of a stone mason. The word "carpenter" means something different today. It is all the result of changed social and labor conditions.

A few centuries ago the word "idiot" meant a member of the Roman citizenry. Citizens in general would resent the description that the word conveys today. We still have idiots—it is a very handy word to have in one's vocabulary—but its application is entirely different from the olden days.

We want to make it very plain to you that the idea—the business—once described by the words "advertising agency" has undergone a complete change.

We like to think of our business as a sort of Association of National Advertisers who have entrusted their interests to our care. We are agents. Where there is an agent there must be a principal. If there is any advantage secured by an honest agent, that advantage will in turn be passed on to the principal.

Do you not see that under our plan of operation the larger and more influential and more successful we become, the better it is for each of the principals who through the giving of his business to us contributes to our development?

If a hundred men wished to invest in an apple orchard in Oregon they would do well to seek a competent and honest person and pool their interests with him, giving him great powers to work for them. The more honest and experienced he is, the more power he should have and the more to their advantage he will use it.

This would be a much cheaper and generally more satisfactory method than for all of the hundred men to journey to far away Oregon and there employ their own judgment in the consummation of a business deal for which they have no peculiar fitness or training.

We are sure that the idea is sound and in this agency its application is sincere. It does not appeal to the type of man who is suspicious nor to one who is desirous of getting something for nothing. And that sort of business man appeals to us just as little as our methods appeal to him.

The development of this thought, however, has brought us the cleanest, strongest and most loyal clientele in the world—has enabled us to give a nation-

wide service, has received the endorsement of the really worth-while publishers and has made our business characterful and strong with the strength of rightness.





THE UNIVERSALITY OF ADVERTISING



ANY commodity or service for which there is a demand, or for which there may be created a demand, is advertisable. The range of industry now profiting through publicity is exceedingly wide, and commercial America is just beginning to realize the possibilities of the printed page as an aid in its affairs. Schools agricultural implements - pickles - gelatine pens - pencils - perfume - suspenders - clothing shoes - tobacco - cotton gins - coal - paper portable houses - insurance - curtains - skates canaries - telephone and telegraph service candies - fish - blankets - towels - scrapple pumps - parrots - church bells - soft drinks motors - stoves - overalls - mattresses - cheese voting machines - aeroplanes - furnaces - oil water - adding machines - paints - engines boats - roofing - mail boxes - guns - sheeting and pillow cases - pianos - gloves - almanacs

bees-honey - fertilizers - books - railroads
steamships - waffle irons - bonds - lye - coffee
cocoa - chocolate - automobiles - butter - ties
bread - underwear - hosiery - chafing dishes
watches - baseballs - silks - hooks and eyes
dress fabrics - linings - rings - salt - crackers
hammocks - tools - laces - flour - cigars - rugs
milk - hats - collars - shirts - scales - fruit jars
lamps - typewriters - silverware - soups - teas
ice cream freezers - baskets - trees - root
beer - coffee - spices - soda fountains - soaps
pajamas - chewing gum - molasses - cows
stationery - furniture - breakfast foods - seeds
flowers—all these things and many, many
more are being exploited by us through
advertising, and successfully, too—in
yearly campaigns ranging in amount from
fifty to a million dollars.

It is difficult for one not associated
with the advertising business to correctly
measure the influence of advertising upon
the very existence of the average man.

What a nation eats and wears—its
pleasures, comforts and home conditions
—these questions are being settled by the
modern economic force called Advertising.

A man is captive to his prejudices. You have a prejudice in favor of your brother—there are millions of men just as good as he, but in your mind he is superior.

You have a prejudice for a piece of music, for a religious doctrine, for a political belief; there are many men who most admire another melody, or hold another religious faith, or are devotees of another political party.

These prejudices are put into our minds through a system of education.

We are born into a family and grow up surrounded by its members and through the years are educated to have a prejudice for our own kin.

We hear an opera and something in its melodious expression finds something kindred in our souls, and we become prejudiced in favor of that particular musical motif.

Through training, through reading, through conversation and association with our fellows we become believers in a certain religious creed and adherents of a particular political doctrine.

Of nothing may you be surer than that prejudice may be put into the human mind through the intelligent use of printers' ink.

People acquire a favorable prejudice for that which they read about, hear about, know about; and if these things about which they are told measure up to their expectations they become lodged with their other prejudices and have an advantage over articles of a similar nature for which no such favorable prejudice exists. (There is no quicker and more certain method of promoting the sale of anything than by advertising it along correct lines.)

Someone has said that if bread and butter were new inventions they would have to be advertised before people would accept them as standard articles of food.

(Marvelous as are the possibilities of advertising, it is a fact not to be disputed that probably half of the tremendous sum yearly invested in advertising is practically wasted because the effort is made along

lines which for various reasons cannot possibly prove effective.)

We have tried to develop an organization to minimize the possibilities of failure. We state, with the utmost frankness that we have learned from the mistakes which we have made.

We believe that there is no other advertising house so closely in touch with industrial, commercial, and publishing conditions in every part of the country as is ours.

We make eight or ten thousand business calls per year, and during the last twelve months representatives of our house have visited almost every state in the Union.

Mark you these men are our representatives—they are not solicitors. Not one of them draws a commission for getting an account. Not one of them ever suffered a decrease in salary because he lost an account. They are engaged to carry on the good fight to win converts to the Ayer Idea, but are under instructions that before a man's business we want his respect and

confidence, and that if we cannot have these, his business is not desired.

We have here a great, throbbing, highly systematized and intelligently organized business for seeking, classifying and applying selling sense.

The business which will not be bettered by this contact is not wanted. The business man who refuses to see the advantage of an alliance with Advertising Headquarters would never be happy here and never make us happy while here.

We call to mind a fountain pen manufacturer who said to one of our representatives: "If business men generally knew what the Ayer organization could do for them you would simply have to select your clients."

We appreciate the compliment, but would like to make plain the difficulty that a house such as ours meets in its effort to explain to business men its system of service.

The American business man is oversolicited by advertising men and oversolicitation always brings over-promising.

Let it become known that a concern contemplates an advertising campaign and immediately a swarm of the ablest, most highly trained solicitors that the business world has ever seen calls to explain what their various houses can accomplish.

? This prospective advertiser has heard of great advertising successes and through the solicitation which he now receives he gets a badly exaggerated point of view as to what advertising might do for him and his business.

Unless he possesses an extremely level head he is apt to award the business on the basis of what has been promised. This is most unfortunate and one of the chief contributing causes to the waste of advertising investment.

(Advertising cannot make a success of a poorly managed business, and most businesses which have succeeded through advertising had within them the capacity to succeed without advertising. Advertising shortens the time and emphasizes the success.)

There are advertising experts galore who can fairly hypnotize a business man with their fascinating fables of success—there are business writers of the highest literary skill whose facile pens weave wordy wisdom with little or no effort—but (advertising really consists of more than ardent solicitation or beautiful phrase making.)

Business men are asked every day to invest great sums in the promotion of some plan, the father of which has not made a success of his own business and who is not entitled to the business respect and business endorsement of the men whose money he solicits.

Would you trust a broker who was notoriously incompetent to manage his own affairs to advise you with reference to your investment?

Would you in any other division of your business turn over a thousand or a hundred thousand dollars to some man with as poor a record for personal integrity and business success as is possessed by many of those who daily succeed in secur-

ing the handling of large advertising appropriations?

The Universality of Advertising is admitted—the all embracing possibilities of publicity in the promotion of merchandise cannot be gainsaid—the wonderful power of constructive advertising is but beginning to be understood—but the greatest disadvantage under which advertising labors today is that business men, shrewd, cautious and conservative in other lines, seem to forget the value of these same qualities when entering upon the expensive and powerful activity called “Advertising.”





SCIENTIFIC SELLING

THE commercial world is alive to the possibilities of scientific manufacturing. Great strides are being made in the application of a set of principles so sincere and simple that their value is not open to doubt. Scientific management is opening the way for greater efficiency and greater economy in production.

The production of an article, however, is but one of the processes through which it must go, and the giant task is today and always has been to find the best method of distributing what is produced.

(Distribution frequently costs more than production. Dollars will go further in their purchasing power and standards of living will be generally enhanced in just the proportion that distribution is simplified and economized.)

(Students of economic conditions are

convinced that the American system of selling has been extremely wasteful and manufacturers in many lines are now earnestly considering not only what they may do to organize their production on the most scientific basis, but also how they may lessen the cost of selling and thereby make a greater profit, or give the consumer the advantage of a better article for the same money or the same article for less money.)

(Intelligent advertising is a powerful aid in the solution of this vexatious problem.)

(It requires effort to sell goods and salesmen must be paid for making this effort. A merchant buys goods to sell them. He is interested in profit and retailing has long since reached the point where quick sales with small profits are more highly regarded than slow sales with large profits.)

(The merchant realizes that well advertised goods are partially sold and that his trade, although the profit per sale may be slightly less, is certain to be more brisk on goods of this character.)

The salesman who can offer to his trade a line of merchandise which is widely known and for which there exists a favorable prejudice can sell his wares with less effort than if he were handling an unknown article.

The manufacturer who is paying salesmen for making a sales effort obviously has to pay less price for less effort. And this condition does not work against the salesman. He can cover more territory, get a better hearing and in the long run make more money.

The scientific ideal endorses a straight line as the shortest distance between two points.

If a railroad is to be constructed from one city to another the engineering ideal is an air line; but, of course, grades must be leveled, streams crossed, other towns taken into consideration, and a practical building of the road means a departure from the ideal.

In merchandising we have a parallel case—the man who makes something and the man who wants something. The sell-

ing ideal is a straight route from one of these men to the other. But there are jobbers, retailers, competitors and market conditions to be considered and in practical selling all these elements must be given due attention.

Advertising, however, provides a short route by which the man who makes something may tell about it to the man who wants such an article, and if enough persons are told and taught, they will make their desires felt through the retailer and the jobber. The manufacturer then gets his reward because he has his mark on his goods and he alone can supply them.

His salesmen find it less difficult to sell the goods and through this process, wisely conceived and courageously conducted, many a business is bringing about a much more wholesome condition in its selling.

Business men are learning that it is better and cheaper and economically more sound to get the bulk of trade in a given line by identifying their merchandise and creating for it a wide demand.

It is not illegal or illegitimate to raise a business beyond the pale of competition by such methods and approach to a monopoly can frequently be built along these lines.

If the man at the head of such a business sees with a clear vision and does not unwisely take too great advantage of the position thus secured, the people at large will be the direct beneficiaries of his activities, big businesses will be spared from pernicious molestation and all of the advantages of great production and scientific distribution may be realized.

It appears reasonable to us that the largest, oldest and most highly organized advertising house in the world is probably in a superior position to furnish counsel and assistance to business men who are confronted with such problems. It is a noteworthy fact that we have been conspicuously successful in developing, frequently from small beginnings, some very large advertising accounts with manufacturers of staple commodities and corporations offering for sale services of a public or semi-public nature.



MAKING A START

WE have no desire to disturb friendly relations between any advertiser and his agent. Our advice to an advertiser is that he first select an agent, then give the agent his confidence, discuss with him all of the intimate problems of the business, and take the agent's advice. If he is proceeding along such lines and his advertising is successful, he should reject the solicitation of other agents and make it plain to them that he is satisfied with his present connection.

We are particularly interested in the beginner in advertising. Our services are naturally of peculiar advantage to him because our wide experience has taught us many things which mean the saving of time and money if he will follow our advice.

It may truly be said that the success we have accomplished for our clients has

come quite frequently through our ability to discover in a business something not apparent to the ownership—something which is really very much bigger and more important than what is commonly called “advertising.”

The important point at this stage of the transaction is not merely to find how advertising may be done, but to find if conditions in the business to be advertised are in harmony with an advertising program.

There must be a sales policy and it must bear proper relationship to the general business. It is of equal necessity that advertising, to be successful, shall be inaugurated and carried forward with the right regard for these conditions.

At the start we regard such matters as copy, media and rates as entirely subordinate to some of the fundamental principles which must be discovered and observed.

New advertisers, and many advertising agents, are apt to place too much importance on the questions whether this picture or that picture shall be used, whether this

publication or that publication shall be employed, whether a certain kind of copy or another kind shall be run.

These are all matters of very great importance as is the question of how much space shall be used and other questions of a similar nature, but all of them may most properly be taken up after an advertising policy and a definite advertising determination have been created. They should then express this policy and determination.

Our primary desire is to bring about such a relation between our house and the advertiser that we shall be in a position to point out advertising difficulties and not suffer because of our candor. We do not, therefore, seek to compete with others in an attempt to alluringly delineate the possibilities of advertising, preparing advertising material to be passed upon by the advertiser, who quite likely because of inexperience is not yet in a position to decide such matters.

We wish to be so related to you that you will not hide from us the real facts—the weakness as well as the strength of

your business—that we, in turn, may have a fair opportunity to tell you truthfully what your business condition requires. We cannot do this if we are under the necessity of presenting a plan more pleasing to you than that which has been presented by others.

Advertising is the most fascinating of businesses. It is intangible and indefinite. There have been so many advertising successes that any man can prove anything about any method.

There is so much half-knowledge floating about that few men are in a position to decide which advertising success is a success because of the advertising, and which a success in spite of the advertising. Business men starting in this untried field need honest, reliable advice.

Do not reason that because your appropriation is small you will give it to some friend or acquaintance, and after you have become a bigger advertiser you will seek a bigger agency if you then feel the need of such services.

By very virtue of the fact that your

appropriation is small, it should be plain to you that you need at the beginning the best advertising assistance.

If your appropriation were large enough, you might pull out with poor assistance; but at the start, when so many problems are to be solved, and it is so highly important that mistakes be avoided, you especially need the guidance and counsel of advertising men of proven integrity and ability.

Do not be led astray by the braggarts of the business who from time to time announce some new way of assuring advertising success.

Today these concerns are telling of one particular method. Last year they were telling of another. The year before they had an entirely different panacea.

Learn how many of the accounts they secured by their marvelous patent process of success three years ago are with them today.

Not long since we advised a new advertiser with reference to his first expenditure. He replied that he had no reason to believe

that our advice was not good, but that he had observed that it had been given without what he considered a proper amount of investigation on our part.

This man, by taking such an attitude, placed a premium on ignorance.

We presume if he were to be operated upon for appendicitis he would not engage a surgeon who by his past experience was competent to handle the case without any further reading or study, but that he would employ a doctor who would have to undergo an elaborate series of investigations in order to equip himself with the skill and experience necessary to perform such an operation.

While this advertiser indulged his penchant for investigation, one of his leading competitors undertook a publicity campaign quite along the lines that we had advised and gained all of the profit that comes from being a pioneer.

No advertising agent has any right to advise the expenditure of another man's money without basing that advice upon information and experience. But a house

such as ours has gathered knowledge from a good many advertising experiences and has through its wide-flung organization almost immediate access to facts and statistics of dependable character.

It is an incident in our business to make all kinds of investigations with reference to consumer, retailer, jobber and competitive manufacturers. It is very rarely that an advertiser even knows of such work.

Our whole theory is to seek clients on the basis of our record of success, and then extend to the clients thus obtained the broadest and most modern advertising and selling service available; rather than to seek advertising orders and try to get them by a cheap and tawdry display of special information or mis-information cooked up to satisfy the advertiser.

Please bear in mind that a gold-brick always looks good. It has to. Its superficial appearance is its sole virtue. We are perfectly willing to admit that we are out-promised every day; but we try to make performance square with promise.



THE DAWN OF A BETTER DAY

WE have traveled forty-three years along the advertising road and in that time we have seen the rise and fall of many advertising institutions, advertising ideas and advertising follies. We have tried the best we knew to contribute somewhat to advertising development, and it is a matter of personal pleasure to us to note the growth of other advertising agencies which are working along the lines that we have preached and tried to practice.

It is a significant fact that advertising is proving anew the old adage that "the right will prevail," and there never was a time in all the history of the business when it was so apparent that a better and larger success comes to the concern which works with uplifting and upbuilding methods.

It is no discredit to the great profes-

sion of medicine that many men unfitted for its practice appear and for a brief while flourish, and indeed, that some charlatans wax wealthy and seem to find permanent success.

It is no reflection on banking that get-rich-quick financial schemes are from time to time inaugurated and that some men transiently succeed in these unholy endeavors.

It argues nothing against the legal profession, the ministry or any other worthy line of endeavor that from time to time these callings are besmirched by the activities of a few unworthy men who are more or less successful.

Advertising during all of its days has been a peculiar sufferer from many of its practitioners. In its beginnings it was unworthily used in the promotion of almost every sort of fraud, and people came to look askance upon anything that was advertised; but in these latter days it has acquired a new dignity and new strength, and the better publishers and cleaner agencies are all concentrating their efforts in the

direction that means more power and more credit to advertising.

We have a belief that American business is facing a better day, that the national conscience has been quickened, that sincerity and honesty pay bigger dividends today than ever before, and their reward tomorrow will be even greater.

(We have a conviction, born of wide observation, that an increasingly large number of business men are in the future going to tie to something sane and substantial in advertising.)

We have a feeling that the advertising organization which gave the best expression of itself and received its highest endorsement from publishers and advertisers in its forty-third year, will not go wrong in its forty-fourth, or forty-fifth, or fiftieth year.

(We have a theory that the more business men there are who know about the Ayer Idea in Advertising, the more business men there will be who will use the Ayer Method of Advertising.

We close this volume with an open

invitation to any business man who has been interested in its reading and who is not satisfied with his advertising, or who has not yet tried advertising as an aid to his business, to advise us, that we may call upon him and discuss the subject more in detail.



J. C. Ayer & Sons

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